

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 26306 120536Z
ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0793

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EA ONLY

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: EMPLOYMENT OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN THE
MIDDLE EAST

REF STATE 226363

1. EMBASSY NOTES (PARA 3 REFTL) THAT DISCUSSIONS HAVE
BEGUN WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AS TO THE POSSIBILITY
OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS RECRUITING LABOR FROM
AMONG INDOCHINESE REFUGEES NOW IN CAMPS IN THAILAND FOR
WORK IN AREAS SUCH AS THE MIDDLE EAST. THE RTG HAS NOT
FOCUSED ON THIS PROPOSAL, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO FORMAL
DISCUSSIONS WITH RTG ON THIS SUBJECT. WE
THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT BEFORE TALKS IN WASHINGTON EXTEND
TO PRIVATE CORPORATIONS WE SHOULD SOUND OUT THE RTG
FURTHER ON WHAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS IN MIND. BEFORE
PROCEEDING WE ALSO BELIEVE IT WILL BE IMPORTANT TO BRING
IN THE UNHCR.

2. THIS COULD BE A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE FOR THE RTG.
IN ADDITION TO WHAT THE RTG MIGHT VIEW AS AN UNDESIRABLE
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PRECEDENT IN DOCUMENTING REFUGEES FOR TRAVEL AND RETURN
TO THAILAND, THERE IS ALSO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THERE WOULD
BE DOMESTIC CRITICISM IF LUCRATIVE MIDDLE EAST JOBS ARE
FUNNELED TO REFUGEES RATHER THAN TO THAIS. THERE ARE
ALREADY OVER 10,000 THAI WORKING ON CONTRACTS IN THE
MIDDLE EAST AND INTEREST AMONG THE THAI LABOR FORCE
CONTINUES STRONG.

3. IN ADDITION TO BASIC POLICY QUESTIONS FOR THE RTG, THERE ARE MANY MAJOR CONCRETE ISSUES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED, SUCH AS WHAT DOCUMENTATION WILL BE ISSUED TO REFUGEES BEFORE DEPARTURE ON WORK CONTRACTS TO PERMIT RETURN TO THAILAND. (WE BELIEVE THE EXACT FORM OF DOCUMENTATION WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO BE STAFFED OUT AND APPROVED BY RTG AND UNHCR, EVEN IF BASIC AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON THE PROPOSAL).

4. ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS DO NOT MILITATE AGAINST RAISING THIS QUESTION WITH THE UNHCR AND THE RTG. HOWEVER, REFTTEL GIVES IMPRESSION THAT THE STATE OF PLAY IN WASHINGTON IS WELL AHEAD OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION HERE.

5. PLEASE PASS TO HA AND ADVISE IF DEPARTMENT CONCURS THAT WE SHOULD RAISE QUIETLY WITH RTG AND UNHCR.
ABRAMOWITZ

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